

# 美九オンステージ

On StageMIKU

DATE A LIVE ENCORE 3

".....Alright, thank you very much!! May the next person please step forward!"

As though prompted by Itsuka Shido, a middle school-esque girl at the front of the queue looked nervous as she took a tentative step forward, in front of Shido, a single girl stood there.

"Ni, nice to meet you....."

And then, the girl greeted with an excited voice, extending out her hand that was trembling slightly towards that lone girl.

In return, the lone girl took that hand gently with both hands.

"Yes, nice to meet you, thank you for always supporting me."

Saying that, she gave a faint smile to the middle-schooler.

Wearing an adorable costume, she was a girl with a tall figure. She has long lavender hair coupled with an attractive smile. However, the aspect that attracts people the most, is probably her voice and not her looks. An elegant bell-like voice that possesses a mysterious quality. When her voice reaches the ear, an illusion that her voice had permeated into their bodies would be generated.

That's got to be the case. Since that girl is one of the most popular idols in Japan, Izayoi Miku.

Shido was currently in a domed hall, a lot of people are crowded here at present, forming a massive queue just like a long serpent.

That's right——;Shido was currently at the scene of a handshake session.

Just for today, Shido had taken on the role of Miku's manager.....Furthermore, he had the additional role of being the event's [Remover].

When facing the idol of their dreams, there's no doubt that fans would wish to hold her hands for even a second longer. Needless to say, fans that do not listen to the staff's instruction or fans who continue to hold hands and talk despite exceeding their time limit will undoubtedly appear, the role of the remover would be to move such fans away in order to allow the handshake event to successfully continue.

However, even though he was a [Remover], Shido's job scope was slightly different from what the usual removers had to do.

"U, um, I, love Miku's songs the most....."

"Is that so? Fufu, I'm really happy to have such a cute girl cheer me on.~"

"Eh.....!? R, really..."

"Hey, how about it, once all of this is over, would you like to go for tea together——"

".....!"

Sensing something amiss, Shido grabbed the middle schooler by the shoulders, half forcefully pulling her away from Miku.

"Right! Thank you very much for coming here——"

Saying that, Shido directed the girl towards the exit. The girl widened her eyes in surprise for a split second but she quickly bowed and left.

That's right. Shido's job was not to remove fans who had overextended their allocated handshake time, but to prevent Miku flirting with cute girls.

"Ahhn—— that was mean, just when I found one that suited my tastes too——"

Miku puffed her cheeks in displeasure. However, her expression soon brightened at the thought of meeting girls that she liked in the queue, extending her hand out once more..... Looks like, this girl needs to be removed soon.

It has been like this since the event, Shido did not take a single break at all.

That was to be expected. Right now in this exact hall, the handshake events of Miku and another idol were running concurrently, however, there were only female fans in Miku's line.

Although her symptoms did change for the better, Miku's fear of men has yet to be overcome, as a result, her handshake event was only limited to girls.

In contrast, the line on the other booth has a larger ratio of males.

Shido turned to the idol at the other booth who was in the midst of her own handshake event, Asakura Hiyori. She too, was an idol who is just as popular as Miku.

Naturally making a friendly expression. Hiyori was just like a professional receptionist. Needless to say, she wouldn't be flirting with her female fans.....Just a little, Shido felt a small pang of envy towards the staff at the other booth.

"——Ahhhn, you're cute too~ If you like, would you want to come with me to——"

".....! Yes, thank you very much for your presence——!"

He had merely looked away for a short while, Miku had already passed her contact details to her fan. Shido hastily removed Miku's fan, letting out a deep sigh.

If this keeps up he would be done in by the work he was tasked to do. How did I get myself into this, Shido expressed a tinge of regret.

Yesterday, Miku had called Shido, asking him to go to a certain ward in a hospital located within the city.

"——Are you, Itsuka Shido-kun?"

The one who made the inquiry with an unfamiliar voice, was a bedridden female who was roughly 25 years old with a leg in a cast.

"Yeah.....That's me."

Shido responded, turning to look at Miku who had stood up from her seat at the side of the bed. Miku seemed to have realized Shido's questions as she nodded her head.

"Ah, this person here is Subaru-san, she's my manager~"

"Nice to meet you, I am Misora Pro's Kurebayashi Subaru"

"Haa... So, do you need me for anything?"

Upon Shido's question, Subaru——gave a long sigh.

"Just as you can see, I had a little accident earlier this morning."

"Haaah..."

"Exactly because of this, I am unable to fulfill my job as a manager, I must find a substitute.....Thinking along these lines, Miku mentioned your name to me."

"Haah...HUH~!?"

Hearing something that he didn't expect, Shido suddenly exclaimed aloud as though he was a lunatic, he turned towards Miku. Miku merely gave a faint smile.

However, not a shred of surprise could be felt from Subaru, she began to give Shido a once-over.

".....Hey, Shido-kun. I'll ask this just in case, what relationship do you have with Miku?"

"Eh!?"

"Ahhh, we're——"

Miku raised a single finger, wanting to say something. Shido instinctually sensed that he was in danger, he raised his voice to .

"F, friends."

".....Really?"

"It's true! Isn't it!! Miku!?"

Sweat formed on Shido's forehead as he spoke, Miku made a complicated expression as though she was saying "That's the truth~"

".....It's fine if that's the case.....About that, idols are terrified of rumours going about, don't you think so?"

"Y, yeah."

Subaru shrugged as she spoke, a stiff smile appeared on Shido's face.

"——And then, can I entrust you with the task of being Miku's temporary manager? You will only have to work till tomorrow at most."

"N, no, that's a little....."

Faced with such a sudden request, Shido expressed his refusal by shaking his head from side to side, however, Subaru was unfazed as she started a soliloquy.

"Tomorrow, is a concert that will determine the idol who will be singing the World Anime Expo's official song. Our enemy is that Asakura Hiyori. She's a strong rival that ties with Miku in terms of popularity, if we were to come out victorious, then we won't have to search for sponsors no longer! We have to defeat her. That's why, I beg of you! Furthermore, you don't have school on Sundays right!"

"That's not the question here! Then again, such an important thing shouldn't be passed to someone like me! Aren't there any other managers that can take over!?"

"Ufufufu! I'd be troubled if you viewed us as a weak little firm! Our firm has the president, an office manager, me, that's it! There's no way we have a substitute manager at all!"

"That isn't something that one should be boasting about, isn't it!"

Shido couldn't help but snark aloud. But then again, he heard Miku not publicly revealing herself, continuing her activities as a mystery idol in order to avoid trouble. Perhaps being understaffed was something that couldn't be helped.

"Relax, it's not something that requires a high degree of skill, you'll only have to do three things. The first is to make Miku win, obviously."

"No no.....Isn't the first task of a high importance already?"

"You don't really have to do anything else, it's fine so long as you create the best environment for this child to perform at her maximum potential——If you do that, she'll be able to obtain victory through her own efforts."

Saying that, Subaru patted Miku's back. Miku smiled proudly with an "Ehehe".

And then, before continuing with the conversation, Subaru looked at Miku.

"——Ah, Miku. I'm sorry to say this, but can you go outside first? I'll have to make him remember the 120 rules of being a manager by heart first."

"Ha.....HUH!?"

"Alright——Please do your best——"

Although Shido had raised his voice in disbelief, Miku had already waved her hand and left.

Once affirming that the sound of footsteps had already disappeared, Subaru continued her sentence,

"I apologize for interrupting our conversation."

"It's alright....."

It looks like Subaru did not want Miku to overhear her. Thinking along those lines, Shido gently shook her head from side to side.

".....I can't say this in front of Miku——That child really a genius. To be honest, it's really quite a waste for her to be in a weak production company like us. There are not many jobs due to the lack in our ability. Miku could have done something better, in that aspect, I feel like I had let her down somehow."

"Kurebayashi-san....."

"It's precisely due to this reason that we cannot afford to lose this opportunity. That child agreeing to make a public appearance is our only chance.——I beg of you, even if it's just for a short while, help me.....No, help Miku."

Under such a burning stare, Shido was rendered speechless.

Letting Miku be more active, Shido was also hoping for the same, furthermore, if he continued to refuse it will only make Miku unhappy. Shido let out a long sigh.

".....Just for tomorrow then."

"! Really!? I'm very grateful to you!"

Subaru's face immediately glowed with brilliance, vigorously shaking Shido's as she spoke to him.

".....Then, you aren't finished right, there are still two more tasks I have to do correct."

"Aaah, it's like this. The second thing would be.....to keep an eye on Miku."

"Keep an eye?"

Faced with such an ominous phrase out of the blue, Shido couldn't help but frown.

"Yes. The truth is like this, there will be a handshaking event in the afternoon.....at that moment Miku will have a lot to say to the girls that she likes."

".....Aaah, I see."

Shido agreed with a wry smile. The aforementioned idol Izayoi Miku, is in actual fact a person who likes cute girls, there are incidents where she would let girls that she had an interest in accompany her in the all-girls school that she attends.

".....I understand, then, what is the last issue?"

Upon hearing Shido's words, Subaru's expressions turn grim.

".....This is extremely confidential, I hope you will keep this a secret....."

"A-alright....."

Shido nodded, Subaru looked solemn as she continued.

"...Actually Miku, appears to have a boyfriend now."

"Pffft.....!?"

Shido couldn't help but splutter.

However, Subaru seemed to have expected that sort of reaction, she continued with a sigh.

"I'm shocked about it as well. If Miku was found out to have a boyfriend, this would raise an enormous scandal. But that child is so defenseless, on stage, she might call out 'Darling' without any hesitation."

"N-no, but.....was she really mentioning a boyfriend?....."

"Would you use the term 'Darling' on anyone aside from your lover?"

"W-who knows, the probability for that being a nickname is....."

"Impossible right? .....I'll ask first just as a precautionary measure, you wouldn't be the one that Miku calls 'Darling' would you?"

Subaru glared at Shido with a glare full of killing intent. Shido shook his head with a pale expression.

".....That's true, a normal person like you, would not be a good match for Miku."

"Y-yeah....."

"Ah, I'm sorry for saying something that may have offended you, I didn't really mean to.....In short, please pay attention to avoid mentioning the issue of this

"Darling" to her fans or anyone in particular. This is something that is as important as a human life, you must be cautious."

"I-I'll keep it in mind....."

Shido nodded his head violently.

.....How to phrase this, Shido could not help but feel that he was the last person on earth that should be taking this job.

"So tiring....."

After the handshaking event. Shido walked down the corridor of the hall with unsteady steps.

That was to be expected. During the handshaking event, just the number of fans that Miku wanted to invite for tea already numbered 109, there were 72 fans that Miku wanted to pass her contact details to, 46 fans that Miku wanted to hug and 8 fans that Miku wanted to kiss on the cheek. A grand total of 235 girls. Shido had barely managed to rescue them from Miku's grasp.

Of course, Shido had already confirmed it with <Ratatoskr>, regarding the issue of accepting this job. Due to Miku's mental state being stable, the job was taken over by Shido without any question. However.....he was considering a request in backup if this was going to continue.

"Phew.....Well, I should probably take a short break before the stage performance starts."

Shido thought to himself whilst walking down the corridor.

Opening the door to the waiting lounge. And then——

"Ara——?"

Letting out an extremely relaxed sound, Miku, who was in the room, looked at Shido.

".....!?"

Looking at her, Shido froze. That was to be expected. The reason for that was, Miku was currently in the middle of changing the clothes that she had worn just now, so she was only in her underwear.

"You...! What are you doing, Miku?"

Shido cried out with a reddened face, however not a shred of panic was seen on Miku's face as she inclined her head to a side.

"Eh? Why, I'm changing of course—— you see, I've perspired so much, isn't it obvious that I have to change out as soon as possible?"





"Then you should do that in the changing room!? What will happen if someone walks in?!"

"There's no problem~, the staff today are all female."

"I'm right here, me!"

Although Shido cried out like that, he just realized that he had been looking at Miku's glamorous figure the whole time. His shoulders' jumped, hastily averting his gaze from Miku.

"Really now, Darling's special, you don't really have to mind——"

Miku stopped mid-sentence as though she had remembered something. Following that,

"Eh——hem, now that a man has seen me like this, I can't get married anymore——"

This time, for some reason, Miku spoke with a monotonous tone.

"Wha....."

Evidently different from what she had said before. Sweat formed on Shido's face.

"It's over now, Miku's body is tainted now."

"H-hold on....."

Shido seemed extremely wretched, Miku closed in and took hold of his hand. Half-forcing him to sit at the nearby sofa.

"H-hey ——....."

"That's why you will.....have to take responsibility ——"

Miku straddled Shido, sealing off his escape routes.

"Miku.....!?"

The faint scent of perfume and perspiration teased Shido's senses. Shido's face became as red as a tomato.

"Hey, if people were to see this.....!"

"Ufufu, if that happens then we'll just have to broadcast to everyone that we're dating then ~——"

"How can we do that.....! F-for starters, can you please release me?"

"Eh——if that's the case ——.Then I'll consider it if Darling agrees to grant me an unconditional wish~?"

"Isn't that a little too broad.....!"

Shido cried out with a wail, Miku showed a mischievous smile, hugging Shido's head with her hands.

"Hyii.....! I-I got it, I got it already!"

"Really——? Then——"

At this moment.

Just as Miku was about to speak, the door to the resting lounge was opened, a young girl who was wearing cute clothes entered the room.

Her age seemed to be about the same as Shido, sponsored hairpins that looked like the sun adorned her soft hair.

Shido had seen her before.—She was at the booth right next to Miku's at the handshake event just now, the idol Asakura Hiyori.

"Thanks for the hard work—"

Hiyori was about to make such a greeting, when she abruptly froze in her tracks.

".....! Miku!"

"Ara—?"

Shido hastily made Miku stand up, he started to face Hiyori and began to explain.

"Eh, Hiyori-san! It's not like that, this is, I don't know whether to say that this is Miku's prank or....."

"....."

Hiyori stood there speechless for a period of time, however, upon looking at Miku, she somehow realized something as she snorted.

"I see.....it really has been hard on you, Manager-san. It's alright, I didn't see anything at all."

"T-thank you....."

Shido swiftly lowering his head in response.

Yet at this particular moment, Hiyori was not looking at Shido at all, she kept staring at Miku loathingly.

".....Izayoi, Miku."

"Ah, isn't this Hiyori—? Ufufu, this must be our first time meeting like this. I've always seen your liveliness on the television, please let me see it next time as well."

Just like that, as though unaware of her hostility, Miku slowly walked towards Hiyori. But Hiyori nimbly retreated, frowning unhappily.

"Although I don't really wish to see you at all."

"Ara—?"

Miku tilted her head in curiosity.

"Did I do something that you dislike —?"

Saying that, Miku made an expression of doubt, Hiyori grit her teeth in response.

"Of course! You, look down on idols too much!"

Her voice had a tinge of panic, her vision narrowed as well.

"Eh—? I can't really agree with you on that....."

"How dare you deny it.....! I've heard plenty of bad rumours about you already, now that I've seen it for myself. You, don't have the qualifications to be an idol!"

Crying out, Hiyori pointed her finger toward Miku. Miku, on the other hand, did not feel alarmed at all, she merely widened her eyes and peacefully responded with an "Ara——".

".....Excuse me, but speaking of rumours?"

Upon Shido's enquiry, Hiyori directed her vision downwards, nodding deeply.

"Changing the staff in the music stores to be all female, bringing your favourite girls back home from secret events, forcing the manager and the like, these are all unacceptable as an idol, how ridiculous!!"

"....."

Although Shido wanted to speak up for Miku, but regrettably, he couldn't come up with anything.

"What are you playing at by being an idol that doesn't show your face!? Don't you know what an idol means? It's being an idol! An idol's work is not done at the end of a song, your being, your existence, all have to take the responsibility of being an idol!"

"Eh——, But I've shown my face already ——....."

"That is exactly why I cannot forgive you! You must have some deep relationship with this person.....Do you know what kind of impression you're giving me!"

"N, no, that was because Miku had her reasons....."

Despite Shido's words, Hiyori banged the table and continued whilst filled with emotion.

"You are a mess through and through, your performance is an imitation. Where's your responsibility of being an idol! Your passion! You lack awareness! Ah, really now, why can't my CDs sales are unable to beat a person like her!"

Hiyori grabbed her hair and let out the loudest outburst yet.

At her words, Shido couldn't help but frown, there was something concerning in Hiyori's words just now.

"Miku's show was an imitation.....? What do you mean by——"

"Anyway! Today, look forward to our competition, let me show you the correct path!"

However Hiyori did not pay heed to Shido's words, she pointed towards Miku once more. On a side note, Miku seemed to be in awe of Hiyori's passionate speech as she clapped her hands.

"Ufufu, I'm looking forward to it, singing with Hiyori on stage. Hiyori is one of the most amazing idols I've known!"

Hearing Miku's words, Hiyori made a displeased face.

".....! Don't joke with me.....!"

"It's true, I have all your CDs, I have anonymously attended your concerts. Your songs, dances and services to the audiences are all excellent. You're really amazing."

"Even if you praise me....."

"However!"

Miku raised a single finger, putting it in front of her lips.

"Hiyori, don't you think you are a little too perfect——.....No, if that's the case I won't even deny it, but aren't you forcing yourself a little? Although I won't ask for you to relax, I think that you'll be even more attractive and cheerful if you sang more freely——"

"Please don't go out and spout nonsense! My fans are here to see my perfect performance, I will definitely not betray my fans!"

Hiyori said aloud with a clenched fist, upon those words, Miku frowned with a complicated expression, as though she was thinking of something, she nodded whilst muttering "Mm——".

"How do I put this.....I think that it's better if you place a little more faith in your fans, no one will leave Hiyori if you mess up a little——I feel that Hiyori, you seem to be a little afraid of the fans."

".....! Wha.....!"

Miku's sentence pushed Hiyori beyond her tolerance, her face turned red like a tomato. Miku, however, did not seem to mind at all, a few seconds later, she clapped her hands together as though coming up with something.

"Ah, that's right! Let's do it like this. I promise to be Hiyori's fan no matter what, so that you can freely——"

"Stop joking!"

Yelling aloud with the most panicked voice heard till now, Hiyori slammed her fist onto the table.

"——Up on stage, I will definitely show you who is more suited to be a real idol.....!"

Leaving behind the line, Hiyori exited the resting lounge.

Bang! She slammed the door shut with a force that was more than necessary, the room fell silent for a while.

".....What a presence."

"You're right ——, she's just like a typhoon ——"

Miku said nonchalantly, Shido made a bitter smile upon that sight.

"Speaking of which.....that's really rare. For Miku to ask about other people."

Have Miku noticed upon hearin Shido's words, she scratched her head and shrugged.

"Hm——, I just can't seem to leave her alone——. She's similar, Hiyori."

"Similar? To who?"

"——Me, from last time."

With that, Miku let out what seemed to be a sigh that had full of meaning.

"She was just like that that time when I was [Tsukino], that time when I had forced myself onto a road of no return——"

That's right. Miku had been active as [Yoimachi Tsukino] in the past, she was not so popular like she is now. She silently accumulated merit, living life as best as she can

But one day, malignant rumours spread around her, Miku was abandoned by her fans, losing her voice due to being mentally pushed to the brink, it wouldn't be too much to say that she had died once.

"That's why, I'm a bit concerned about her."

However, Miku took a deep breath.

"I just can't be like Darling. Darling is really awesome——"

"Eh?"

Hearing something unexpected from Miku, Shido tilted his head in question. Miku chuckled.

"Really now, have you forgotten ——? The words that I said to Hiyori was not so different from what Darling said to me the last time——?"

"Ah..."

After Miku's reminder, Shido widened his eyes, now that she had mentioned it, he did seem to have said something like that.

It was probably due to Miku saying it so naturally that Shido did not notice, but she had been right, those were definitely words that Shido had said to Miku before.

"Because of that, I was saved, it was because of Darling's words, that the current me exist."

"Ehh um....."

It was embarrassing for those words to be said to him. Shido started to speak in order to change the topic.

"T-then again, Miku. Your past fans, do they still remember the name [Tsukino]."

"No, I think that they probably do not remember anymore."

"? Is that the case?"

Shido scratched his head in wonder, Miku raised a single finger to explain.

"I, in order to erase my past existence, have always been infusing my Spirit powers into my songs——the people who hear these songs will slowly forget the person known as [Yoimachi Tsukino]."

"Aaah.....So that's why."

"Well, my powers are currently sealed and I think there shouldn't be anyone who remembers anymore, so that 'bitch', will no longer worry of being badmouthed any longer."

Miku said jokingly, Shido's shoulders jumped.

"I'm sorry, I didn't really mean to——"

"Ufufu, I know ~"

Miku smiled softly, placing her hands on her hips after spinning on the spot once.

"Well, it should also be time for me to get ready as well——Although I don't really care much about what Hiyori said about being a true idol, but since Darling is cheering for me at the V.I.P. seats, I'm going to take this seriously."

Saying that, Miku formed a gun with her index finger and thumb, making a pose as though she would be shooting Shido in the heart.

"I will make you fall for me, Darling."

That posture, Shido's heart seemed to have been stolen away without even witnessing Miku's performance on stage, it was that beautiful.

——A few minutes later. An excited atmosphere started to emit from the semi-circular dome.

That was to be expected. Izayoi Miku and Asakura Hiyori, the two idols with comparable popularity are about to compete right here.

The performance is going to start with Miku followed by Hiyori. After their performances, the judges as well as the audience will give points. In truth, even a single point would be beneficial to their favourite idol, the fans on both camps enthusiastically wait whilst cheering the idols on.

But the current Miku seemed to not be so fixated on winning.

"Then, I'm going now ——"

Miku waved her hand and walked towards the part of the stage that was not being illuminated by the lights, standing at her designated position. Judging from Miku's actions, she doesn't seem to be under any sort of stress or tension at all.

——The spotlights soon shone onto center stage. Miku's performance, was starting.

[—————]

Along with the accompanying music, Miku started to sing with a bewitching voice, and with that amazing voice, she caused the whole concert hall to reach a new high.

".....She really is, amazing."

Shido who was watching her performance at the special seats at the side of the stage inaudibly gulped.

Standing on stage, microphone in hand. Miku right now, seems like a carefree ojou-sama who had transformed into an idol. In the instant Miku started singing, she probably will be the centre of attention.

Calling her a diva should be more apt. An overwhelming sense of presence. Her own fans have been dazzled by her brilliance.

Needless to say, Hiyori's fans who took up almost half the hall were also enthralled by Miku.

Also.

".....Hm?"

Shido noticed that there was someone else at the side of the stage.

—It was Asakura Hiyori.

Hiyori seemed to have not noticed Shido, sweat formed on her face as she witnessed Miku's performance.

".....Amazing. But, as expected....."

Just like that, she was mumbling to herself with a soft voice.

"I have to win.....I must.....I cannot lose to this sort of person—"

"Asakura Hiyori-san?"

".....!"

Being called out by Shido. Hiyori's shoulders jolted.

"Y, you are.....Miku's manager.....?"

"Ah.....that's right. I am Itsuka, the temporary manager."

Despite emphasizing on the word [temporary], Hiyori was uninterested as she turned to look at Miku once more.

That's not entirely correct as well—rather than being uninterested, why not say that Hiyori did not have spare time or energy to pay attention to Shido at the moment. Her hands, feet, ears, and eyes were all spellbound by the song. It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that she is the most enthusiastic person in the whole concert hall.

—With her sight still fixated on Miku, Hiyori spoke with a trembling voice.

".....It's really unfair, for the heavens to give such amazing talent to a person who doesn't take things seriously like her."

"Eh? No, Miku's not like that....."

"It's okay, I won't say anything. I know you've had it hard as well."

"That's.....umm,.....ehhh."

Although he wanted to say something to refute her claims. Shido was unable to say anything.

Hiyori stared directly at Miku, clenching her fists.

"—I must not lose, an idol.....has to be perfect."

".....Eh?"

With a wavering voice, Shido frowned as he turned to look at Hiyori.

From the side view of her face that was looking at Miku's performance, panic as well as frustration can definitely be glimpsed from it.

That was understandable, it was going to be Hiyori's turn next, one would most definitely feel uneasy no matter how used to the stage, but the instant Shido looked at Hiyori's face, he remembered what Miku had told Hiyori earlier.

(How do I put this, she'll end up pushing herself to the edge if she keeps cornering herself like this—)

Right now, the current Hiyori who is observing Miku from the sidelines, looks like a child that was being overwhelmed by panic.

"Why.....?"

"Eh——?"

"Why does Hiyori want to be so perfect?"

At Shido's words, Hiyori turned her attention to him for just a mere fraction of a second.

".....Did Miku tell you to ask me that?"

"T,that's not it.....how should I put this, isn't it best for an idol to not have such self-depreciating thoughts....."

"....."

Hiyori was silent for a long while before she let out a deep sigh.

".....I, had an idol that I admired very much. She was a newcomer as well, so she wasn't that well known, but she had an amazing voice.....one that tugs at the audience's heartstrings.....you can say that, she is who I long to be."

"So it was like that?"

Shido uttered in response. Hiyori nodded in assent as she continued.

"She was merely a year apart, yet her voice was able to invigorate so many people. That was the trigger to my dream of being an idol."

".....Don't tell me, that she was a perfectionist?"

"You're wrong. It's the opposite."

"Opposite?"

Raising her head, Hiyori gazed into the distance as she moved her lips.

"That person, was swamped by scandals, was abandoned by her fans, and committed suicide."

"Eh——"

Hearing that, Shido couldn't help but widen his eyes.

"Thinking back, there is insufficient evidence to prove that what the tabloids reported were true, but what if one of them was true, it would also be sufficient to completely ruin a newcomer idol with a bright future like her.—Her songs were sincere, if such an incident had not had happened, then every single person in Japan probably would have been her fan right now."

Hiyori grit her teeth in regret, clenching her fists. It was an expression filled with hatred that she must not show to her fans at all costs.

Could she have noticed it as well, Hiyori allowed her body to relax.

".....That's why, I am in the right. [Idols], Practice will improve those who can't sing well, practice can help those who can't dance well, if one doesn't look good then make-up will do the trick. We're not allowed to have a single injury, even if there is, we are not allowed to let anyone find out, everything else has to be dazzling."



"Hiyori....."

Shido gulped, as he was facing Hiyori who had such a negative outlook.

Hiyori's determination was "Because the idol I had admired failed, I must not be like her".....It was such a simple thought.

Like a bud that was plucked before it even got the chance to bloom, despite the fact that it could have been even more beautiful after it bloomed. Hiyori's expression seemed like she wanted to take revenge.

".....I cannot stay like this.—I must not lose to this imitation."

"Eh.....?"

Shido tilted his head in confusion at Hiyori's words. But thinking back on what she had said. Hiyori had said something similar at the lounge—saying that Miku's performance was a mere imitation.

"What, do you mean by that?"

Shido asked, Hiyori gave Miku another look of loathing before speaking.

"Miku's performance is similar, to the idol I had mentioned before—Yoimachi Tsukino. That's why.....I cannot forgive her. As an idol, as well as being Tsukino's fan."

"Eh.....Is, is that so —"

Hearing Hiyori's words, Shido's voice faltered. Shido knew how much Miku loved to sing. Shido will never believe that Miku would imitate someone else's singing. But it didn't seem that Hiyori was lying. Don't tell me, she really—

".....Hm?"

And so. Shido nodded to himself.

He remembered the name of the idol that Hiyori had mentioned.

".....About that, Hiyori-san."

"What is it?"

"Don't tell me.....How should I say this. Did you just mention Yoimachi Tsukino?"

Shido carefully asked, Hiyori on the other hand, widened her eyes in surprise.

"Do you know her? I'm glad, at least someone still remembers her."

"That's not what I meant, that person....."

Sweat formed on Shido's face, he pointed at the stage.

".....Is currently singing on stage."

"Eh?"

Hiyori exclaimed as though she had lost her mind, her pupils shrank to dots.

After a short while, Miku, who was on stage, glanced at Shido a few times, Shido held his breath.

And then. As though finally realizing the situation, Hiyori's face twisted.

"Eh, A,a,aahhhhhhhhhhh!?"

It looks like, she had been affected by the Spirit power Miku had infused in her songs. Thanks to Shido pointing it out, she finally noticed that the two were one and the same.

"Eh? Ehh.....? That's not right, since, didn't Tsukino commit suicide....."

"About that, she failed."

"Miku and Tsukino's performances are very similar....."

"Rather than saying very similar, they are the same person....."

"....."

It was evident that Hiyori's face was flushed.

"E, eeeeeeehhhhhhhhhh!?"

—In the instant Hiyori yelled out, Miku's performance was over. The concert hall echoed with thunderous applause.

[Now then—Next we have Hiyori-san's performance!]

Once the MC had made the announcement via the microphone. The hall burst out in applause in anticipation for Hiyori's performance. Following that, the audience seats soon had countless light sticks waving in the air.

"—Is it Darling's first time viewing Hiyori's performance—? Ufufu, it's really amazing, well, I'm still better though—"

Miku piped up while wiping her sweat as she returned to the side of the stage. But Shido made a stiff reply.

"A, aaah.....Is that so?"

"? Did something happen?"

"M, maybe....."

Shido's face tinged with panic as he looked at Hiyori. The music had started, Hiyori's singing resounded in the hall. That amazing poise and display, was exactly that of an idol.

And yet—

".....Ah!"

Miku cried aloud. During the chorus of the song, Hiyori glanced at Miku, her body trembled for an instant and her voice stopped singing.

As she was in the midst of recovering from her fluster, she tripped, falling onto the stage floor. The sudden change in events caused a commotion in the concert hall.

"W, what's the matter, this is not like Hiyori....."

In contrary to Miku who was looking at Hiyori with eyes of concern, perspiration formed on Shido's forehead

.....How should he explain this, that the reason for Hiyori to act this way was completely understandable.

Noticing the true identity of the idol whom she had admired for so long. There was no real necessity in telling Hiyori who was about to go on stage at all. Shido started to regret that thoughtless action.

To let Miku win, if he only considered this, it would probably be fine to do so as her manager. However, Miku would never be satisfied with this kind of victory. Shido wished to see Hiyori's performance at her best himself. If he doesn't do something.....

Probably noticing something, Miku looked at Hiyori and Shido.

"A, aaah, things aren't looking good. You have to hurry up and stand.....! It's alright, the fans will never hate you for something like this——!"

Miku looked as wretched as though the same thing had happened to her, her fingers interlocked and placed on her chest as though in prayer.

".....! Miku!"

Hearing Miku's words, Shido's eyes widened.

"You, said it at the lounge right. That no matter what happens, you will always be Hiyori-san's fan——is that true?"

"Eh? Yeah, of course——"

Miku answered without any hesitation. Hearing this, Shido nodded.

"Then, once more, please convey your feelings to her. Right now, the only one that can save Hiyori, is probably Miku."

"Eh? But, towards me, she....."

Miku frowned in surprise, however upon immediately realizing that Shido was not kidding. She readily nodded, facing the stage, taking a deep breath.

"A, aaah....."

Hiyori stood on stage, her heart was filled with despair.

A fatal mistake. At a location where she was supposed to show an idol's brilliance, she had instead displayed such a disgraceful appearance. Her vision swam. Her body trembled violently. She has no idea what to do anymore——;

"———HIYORI———! DO YOUR BEST———!!"

"Eh——?"

All of a sudden.

Echoing throughout the concert hall that had been abruptly silenced, Hiyori uttered a sound in a daze.

But, she quickly understood who had called out to her——Miku. Miku who was watching Hiyori from the side of the stage, who did not even use a microphone, she just shouted directly at Hiyori.

"Miku,....."

Looking at the side of the stage once more. It was the idol that Hiyori had admired. The figure of Yoimachi Tsukino.

Voice, poise, as well as Tsukino's face from Hiyori's memories. Why did it take so long for her to finally realize.

Tsukino was, looking at her right now. For Hiyori's sake, she called out with words of encouragement.

That made Hiyori, so elated to the point of nearly bursting into tears.

—Now that she thought about it.

The words Miku had said in the lounge, perfectly pinpointed out the flaws in Hiyori's thinking.

Having knowledge of Tsukino's most tragic period of her life, Hiyori who had set a perfect idol as her goal, was too focused on being perfect and ended up cornering herself.

The job that she should been so happy about slowly became a duty. The audience became supervisors. If this continues on, she would probably have forgotten why she wanted to sing, to become an idol.

"Ah.....,ah—"

However—yes, that's right. Hiyori finally remembered.

It was because she had wanted Yoimachi Tsukino to hear her songs that she went for the auditions to become an idol. Wanting to stand alongside that person, wanting to sing and dance with her. She wanted to become an idol so that she could inherit that person's will.

—Hiyori recalled the conversation in the lounge earlier. Maybe it was just a passing remark; However, that Yoimachi Tsukino, had said to Hiyori.—That no matter what happens, she will always be Hiyori's fan.

—If that's the case, then Hiyori, doesn't have anything left to fear anymore.

And so. The instant Hiyori got back onto her feet. Just like in response to Miku's cry. The audience waved their lightsticks creating a field of light. An enormous roar called out to Hiyori.

".....! Eve, everyone—"

Hiyori couldn't help but cry out.

That's right, what was in front of Hiyori's eyes right now was not the cold hard gazes of the supervisors in the past, but the passionate expectations of the fans that wish to hear Hiyori sing.

Such a simple thing. Hiyori could only recall just recently.

—Just now, she was still talking down to a true idol, there has to be a limit to idiocy. Hiyori remembered her previous words and actions and softly laughed.

She stood up on stage once more.—No, she had returned.

"Well, let me give my best performance ever to you all!!"

Hiyori gripped the microphone once more, singing echoed in the hall once again.

[—Now then, let the results of the judging begin.]

Hiyori's performance ended with the audience's thunderous applause. Roughly ten minutes later, Miku and Hiyori stood side by side on stage, the MC started to declare the winner of the two.

[The image song artist for the World Anime Expo is——]

After a few seconds of drumbeats, the spotlights shone onto Miku with a unified sound.

[After a heated debate, it is decided that it is Izayoi Miku's victory!!]

In that instant, sonorous applause sounded out from the audience.

[Congratulations, Miku-san. Please give us a brief description of your feelings right now.]

[Ufufu, I'm really grateful to everyone. I'm extremely happy.]

The MC brought out a bouquet and passed it to Miku, Miku smiled faintly as she waved to the audience. Soon after that, the concert hall erupted in cheer.

"She won...huh."

Shido who had been watching this from the side of the stage, heaved a sigh of relief.

After all, the most important task as her manager has been achieved.

As well as——

"....."

Looking at Hiyori who was standing beside Miku, Shido's mouth slightly gaped open. Her expression was completely different, she was exuding a sense of satisfaction and she seemed to be really happy for Miku from the bottom of her heart.

[——Well then, this concludes the concert!]

Saying that. The MC dexterously did a flip, raising his hand as though trying to attract everyone's attention. The projector installed began to project several flashy pictures.

[Although it is a little sudden, next Sunday, we are going to hold W.A.E.'s image song artist's promotion activities! The person that is going to be featured is of course Izayoi Miku-san who is being illuminated before you all!!]

As the MC used a resounding voice to make the declaration, the audience called out with voices of approval.

".....Hn?"

However, Shido started to frown at the situation.

That's because as the MC announced the piece of news, Miku too displayed an expression of shock.

[——P, please wait a minute, is it next Sunday?]

[Eh? Yes, that's right.....]

[I, didn't hear anything about this——]

[Ah,well, that's because it was a surprise event. Furthermore, we've only just confirmed the schedule with the relevant departments that's why.....]

[.....]

Miku did not speak for some time, after which she suddenly snatched the announcer's microphone, loudly declaring.

"Everyone——! Will all of you please listen to a request of mine?"

At Miku's words, the fans below the stage let out a roar of agreement.

"I too, wish to have a right to vote, I want to have all of my votes to be transferred to Hiyori."

Amongst the audience, there were voices that supported Miku's suggestion, there were some that were guessing Miku's motives and there were those fans who want to hear Hiyori at the W.A.E. The MC too, was panicking at Miku's intentions.

However Miku didn't mind at all, she slowly walked in front of Hiyori.

[—Hiyori, your performance, it was extremely entertaining~]

[Eh? Tsuki——no, Miku, I, umm.....]

[My request, can you hear me out?]

Although Hiyori was confused for a moment, upon hearing Miku's gentle voice, she nodded her head hard in agreement.

[Thank you.]

Miku smiled, handing over the bouquet of flowers to Hiyori——And then, pressed her lips onto Hiyori's cheek with a 'chu'.

[Hauwa.....!]

This was definitely something out of her expectations, Hiyori's face turned beetroot red in confusion, collapsing weakly onto the stage. For some reason the concert hall burst out in applause and cheer.

"H, hey ——,Miku.....?"

She's gone overboard no matter how you look at it. Shido started to call out to stop Miku.

However, Miku did not seem to mind at all, as she threw down the largest piece of news yet.

[Ufufu, please look forward to Hiyori's performance, I will—— so will Darling.]

"WHAT'S———GOING———ON———HERE!?"

After the ruckus. Shido gingerly returned to the ward, what greeted him was as Shido had expected, it was Miku's manager, the furious voice of Subaru.

"P, please calm down, Kurebayashi-san.....!"

"How can I calm down! Let Miku win! Don't let Miku talk endlessly with girls! Don't raise the issue about Miku and the opposite gender! Didn't everything fail!"

Subaru caught hold of Shido, after violently shaking him for a while, she gave out a loud sigh.

".....I apologize, I've lost my cool. I know that 100% of all this was Miku's fault.....I was being too unreasonable in pushing this responsibility to you....."

"N,no.....I too, am sorry....."

As Shido spoke, Subaru released her hands from Shido's collar, letting out another deep sigh.

"Despite all of this.....I thank you. I will try my best to resolve this incident....."

"Do you have to do.....something?"

Shido carefully asked, Subaru dejectedly nodded her head.

"I have to——First of all is the issue of being W.A.E.'s image artist, well, that can't be helped. Although that was a good opportunity, but Miku's CDs has already been selling well, letting Asakura Hiyori win may turn out to be a good thing after all.

"I, is that so."

"Regarding that kiss on the cheek.....it should be fine as long as the other party doesn't raise a lawsuit against us. We'll just treat that as a slight overdose of yuri."

".....I understand. But——"

Shido asked, Subaru, on the other hand, answered with certainty.

".....The largest problem on our hands is the issue of Miku's Darling. The last time at Tennou Festival, we managed to play off Darling as the audience, we've managed to avoid a misunderstanding.....but this time it's going to be way harder....."

".....In the worst case scenario, [Darling] would have to be presented as a dog that she is raising, the mini Dachshund [Darling]."

".....To think that you are able to do that."

"We've got no choice but to do that already."

Subaru shrugged with reluctance, somehow, she seems to be a woman that could be relied on.

"I'm sorry that so much has happened, Itsuka-kun, the payment will be remitted into your account later on."

"No.....I'm the one that should be apologizing since I didn't really do much."

"Pay no heed,——Do forget about this incident, I hope that you will continue to be on good terms with Miku. Just look at that child, she doesn't have any other male friends."

"A, ahaha.....I understand."

And so, just as Shido was about to exit the ward, a voice called out to him from behind.

"Oh right, Itsuka-kun. I seem to remember that your school is Raizen High, am I correct?"

"Eh? Yes, that is so....."

Shido replied, Subaru reached out for the drawer at the side of her desk, handing over a single photograph for Shido to see.

"Actually, there was a picture of an adorable girl amongst the photos Miku took. Judging from the uniform, she should be from Raizen High, have you met her before? If it is possible I'd like to invite her to become a model."

"Haaaa....."

Numerous beautiful girls such as Tohka, Origami and the Yamai sisters study within Raizen High School. It's possible that one of the above was inside the photo. It would be alright if it was Origami, if Tohka or the Yamai sisters were to find out about this, it could become troublesome.....Shido looked at the photograph with that line of thought in mind.

".....!?"

However. The person that was in the photograph was beyond what Shido had expected, his body stiffened.

Her head had an accessory that looked like a four leaf clover, she was a tall girl. Her confident frown on her androgynous appearance was her selling point.

If asked if Shido had seen this person before, the answer is undoubtedly yes.

That girl's name was Itsuka Shiori.....That's right, standing beside Miku in the photograph due to Kotori's instructions, it was Shido dressed in girl's clothing.

"So? Have you seen her before? It says here that her name is Shiori-chan, but Miku would only tell us so much —this child here is excellent. She's full of potential. If she would take a swimsuit photo collection, it would definitely strike the hearts of everyone. Ah, going down the path of a singing idol wouldn't be too bad too —"

"No, you, I don't recognize her....."

Sweat constantly flowed down Shido's face as he robotically replied, exiting the ward as though he had a bounty on his head.

"Ah, are you done speaking——?"

Thus. Miku who had been waiting outside the ward, peacefully inquired in contrast to Subaru's agitation a few minutes ago.

"Aaah.....Although she did lose her temper."

"Ahaha——,really that Subaru, she worries too much——"

"....."

Although Shido thought that Miku had been too bold, but he felt that he ought to be silent for now.

".....Then again, Miku."

"Hm? Is something the matter?"



"It was a hard fought victory, why did you let Hiyori win? If you had accepted that job, wouldn't you be more active?"

"Hm, I believe that Hiyori is better suited to that than I do —If it's her, I'm sure she'll be able to do a good job—Furthermore....."

"Furthermore?"

Shido tilted his head? Miku gave a small chuckle.

"—There's an Autumn festival at a nearby shrine next Sunday, don't you know that—?"

"Eh?"

Shido's eyes widened in response to Miku's words.

"J-just for that!? If you want to go to festivals can't we go to other shrines?"

"No way~—The god enshrined there is the deity of marriage, I heard that lovers would definitely be together if they go there to pray during the Autumn festival."

".....Eh?"

"Didn't you say that you would agree to one wish of mine—?"

"Ahh....."

.....Now that he thought about it, he had indeed made such a promise before. Shido made an exhausted sound in reply.

Miku looked at Shido who was in such a state, smiled faintly, raising up her pinky finger.

"— Of course you'll invite me to a date, won't you, Darling?"